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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 001520

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US MISSION VIENNA FOR AMBASSADOR SCHULTE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PINS](#) [ENRG](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR AMB SCHULTE'S JUNE 20
VIDEOCONFERENCE WITH TURKISH PRESS

REFS: A. 06 ANKARA 6526

[1](#)B. ANKARA 0479

[1](#)C. ANKARA 0521

[1](#)D. ANKARA 1306

[1](#)E. ANKARA 1347

[1](#)F. ANKARA 1379

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Turkey's officials continue to acknowledge Iran's nuclear program as a threat, but the current domestic political crisis, as well as concerns over PKK terrorism and Iraq, have kept Iran off the front burner. Your June 20 DVC with Turkish journalists will help us keep the threat posed by a nuclear-armed Iran on the agenda here and allow us to continue to press for Turkey's support. Turkish journalists will be curious to know what we plan to do if Iran continues to move forward with its nuclear program and what we expect of Turkey. The discovery of Iranian weapons aboard a Syria-bound train in Turkey's southeast on May 25 has served as a graphic reminder for Turkish officials of the Iran-Syria axis and the weapons proliferation threat. While slow to implement UNSCRs 1737 and 1747, Turkey has been responsive to our requests to compel suspicious transiting Iranian and Syrian cargo and charter aircraft to land for inspection.
End Summary

Fear Amidst Growing Economic Relations

[1](#)2. (C) Turkish officials view a nuclear-armed Iran through the prism of Iran's quest for dominance in the region at the expense of Sunni-majority countries. The Turkish military is overall more sensitive to the physical threat that an Iranian nuclear weapon would pose to Turkey as a NATO ally. All are aware that, standing between Iran and its erstwhile ally Syria, Turkey is prime real estate for the trafficking of weapons of all kinds between them. At the same time, the GOT is encouraging growing bilateral trade and tourism links, and already imports between 15 and 20 percent of its natural gas from Iran. Despite our strong objections, Turkey is discussing expanding its energy relationship with Iran to include investment in electricity and potentially upstream oil and gas production and transit. Thousands of Turkish

trucks transit Iran while plying their trade with Central Asia; most Turkish commercial flights heading east transit Iranian airspace. The GOT has been gratified by measures the Iranian government has taken against PKK terrorism along the tri-border area; Turkish and Iranian security officials cooperate on a local level against that common terrorist threat.

Diplomatic Engagement

13. (C) For these reasons, Turkey strongly advocates a diplomatic solution to Iranian nuclear problem. PM Erdogan has stated that Turkey could not support an Iranian nuclear program that included weapons development. The MFA has publicly called on Iran to be transparent and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (ref a) and assures us that its private messages to Tehran are tougher. Turkey has urged Tehran to support our P-5 Plus One offer from May 2006. Turkey was pleased to be seen hosting a meeting on Iran's nuclear program in Ankara between EU Foreign Policy Chief Solana and Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani on April 25. While little of substance resulted from that meeting, it gave the government an opportunity to demonstrate Turkey's desire to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the stand-off.

Military Remains Cautious

14. (C) The military leadership at the Turkish General Staff (TGS) has taken a strategic yet pragmatic view of Iran. Senior officers who distrust Iran because of its

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fundamentalist Shiite government and the years of shelter it provided to PKK fighters across the border view an Iranian nuclear program as a regional threat. While senior military officials have been outspoken on political issues, they have said almost nothing publicly about Iran. In a notable departure, CHOD GEN Buyukanit in a speech on terrorism at the Turkish War Academies in Istanbul on May 31, called the proliferation of WMD a serious international concern, and said specifically that efforts by some (unnamed) countries to develop nuclear weapons constituted a threat to those countries and to surrounding nations.

Slow to Enforce UN Sanctions

15. (C) While leery of broad-based sanctions and generally dubious about the effectiveness of such measures, MFA officials have assured us that Turkey fully supports UNSC Resolutions 1737 and 1747, and is committed to enforcing them. The GOT has, however, been slow to enact enforcement mechanisms. In the case of UNSCR 1737, the MFA took early steps to inform departments across the government and after translating the provisions of the resolution submitted a recommendation for its promulgation to the Prime Ministry for approval by the Council of Ministers. As of mid-June, the package still has not been enacted. With UNSCR 1747, the MFA took similar steps of informing a broad range of GOT ministries and preparing a package recommending approval by the Cabinet. Once the UNSCR 1737 measures have been signed approved by the Council of Ministers, they say, the MFA will forward the 1747 package to the Prime Ministry for Council of Ministers approval.

Responsive on Suspect Overflights

16. (S) The GOT has sought to be responsive to our requests that it deny overflight or require ground inspection of suspicious Iranian and Syrian aircraft transiting Turkey. On multiple occasions over the past year, including twice in recent weeks, the government has required Iranian or Syrian

cargo or other charter planes which requested overflight of Turkish airspace to land for inspection. Government authorities have conducted periodic random inspections of Iranian and Syrian charter aircraft which request overflight of Turkish airspace since July 2006. To date, no illicit cargo has been reported found on inspected aircraft; Turkish officials admit to us that Iranian and Syrian authorities are warned when Turkey plans to request an inspection.

The Smoking Gun -- Iranian Weapons Found on Train

17. (C) Turkey was embarrassed by the discovery of Iranian arms on a train bound for Syria on May 25. According to the MFA, over 1,500 rounds of 81 mm mortar shells, 150 rounds of 120 mm mortar shells, 275 RPG barrels, 115,000 rounds of sniper rifle cartridges, and 64 boxes of smoke grenades were found. Repeated Turkish requests of Tehran for an explanation have gone unanswered and the MFA dispatched Deputy U/S Sinirlioglu to Tehran on June 10. As a result of this incident, Turkish Customs has tightened the targeting matrix for inspections of shipments departing Iran and has also increased the number of random searches that are now being conducted on this border (ref e). We have strongly urged the MFA, at all levels, to report the attempted arms shipment to the UN. Officials have told us they will consider doing so once Sinirlioglu reports his findings.

Journalists' Questions

18. (C) During the DVC, Turkish journalists will likely focus on the possibility of unilateral U.S. military action should sanctions fail to deter Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. They may also ask whether the U.S. will seek broader economic sanctions, which could affect Turkey's trade with Iran. They will want to know what the U.S. expects of Turkey in this regard. A few journalists are conversant on the specifics of UN sanctions and may ask whether the U.S. is

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satisfied with Turkey's efforts to implement UNSCRs 1737 and 1747. Some may seek to drag you in to the political debate here by asking whether the U.S. believes the moderately Islamic AKP government is the best partner to deal effectively with the regional threat posed by Iran.

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